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Water and sanitation in Greenlandic communities

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INTRODUCTION

There is a documented relation between water borne diseases and water and waste water handling systems, just as the frequency of water washed diseases has been related to the water distribution method and abundance of water in homes. An inventory for Greenland on the access to household running water and sewer services is not readily available. In this work we have collected data from all four municipalities in Greenland to provide evidence of the present situation.

METHODS

By contacting municipality professionals in all Greenlandic municipalities as well as the water distribution company Nukisiorfiit, we have collected data on the access to household running water and sewer services in Greenland.

RESULTS

In larger towns (> 500PE) almost all houses have access to running water, typically surface water from a nearby lake. In some towns the water is abundant; while in others it is a limited resource, and ice has to be thawed during winter to cover the needs. In a few settlements the inhabitants are themselves responsible for collection of water from streams or ice, and running water is provided in central service houses only. Wastewater treatment in Greenland is non-existing: Waste water effluents are discharged directly at the coastline to local water recipients. In larger towns sewerage has been installed and most dwellings are connected, while in smaller settlements, honey bag toilets are collected from the dwellings and discharged to sea, ice or land by the municipality.

CONCLUSIONS

The inequality in access to household running water and sewer services among Greenlanders is big. In many places there is a risk of direct contact between inhabitants and sewage.